

JANUARY 9, 1978

BRAZIL'S NEXT PRESIDENT

ANNCR:

BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT ERNESTO GEISEL HAS CHOSEN THE OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT CANDIDATE FOR THIS YEAR'S INDIRECT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. VOA'S CLAUDIO ESKENAZI HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

NARR:

CONTRARY TO THE PATTERN OF MILITARY RULE ELSEWHERE IN THE THIRD WORLD, BRAZIL'S ARMED FORCES -- WHICH TOOK OVER THE GOVERNMENT IN 1964 -- HAVE HELD FIRM TO THE PRINCIPLE OF ORDERLY SUCCESSION OF POWER. NONE OF THE FOUR ARMY GENERALS WHO BECAME PRESIDENT SINCE 1964 WAS ALLOWED TO SERVE MORE THAN HIS CONSTITUTIONAL FIVE-YEAR TERM. IN EACH INSTANCE, THE INCUMBENT WAS SUCCEEDED BY ANOTHER ARMY GENERAL, USUALLY SELECTED BY CONSENSUS AMONG THE MILITARY'S TOP LEADERSHIP.

BRAZIL'S CURRENT PRESIDENT, ERNESTO GEISEL, HAS FOLLOWED THE SAME PROCEDURE, BUT WITH ONE IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE. HE HAS MANAGED TO HAND PICK HIS OWN SUCCESSOR, NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICE CHIEF, GENERAL JOAO BAPTISTA FIGUEIREDO. GENERAL FIGUEIREDO HAS BEEN CONSIDERED A LIKELY CHOICE TO SUCCEED PRESIDENT GEISEL FOR SOME TIME NOW. AND LAST WEEK'S OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS CANDIDACY CAUGHT NO ONE BY SURPRISE.

GENERAL FIGUEIREDO'S ELECTION IN OCTOBER WILL BE A MATTER OF FORMALITY INASMUCH AS THERE IS NO DIRECT PRESIDENTIAL CONTEST IN BRAZIL. AN ELECTORAL COLLEGE MADE UP OF MEMBERS OF BOTH HOUSES OF THE BRAZILIAN CONGRESS AS WELL AS REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE TWENTY-ONE STATE HOUSES WILL OFFICIALLY SELECT MISTER GEISEL'S SUCCESSOR. SINCE THE GOVERNMENT PARTY, ARENA, COMMANDS A MAJORITY IN BOTH HOUSES AND IN THE STATE LEGISLATURES, MISTER FIGUEIREDO'S ELECTION IS ASSURED. THE

ONLY LEGAL OPPOSITION PARTY, THE BRAZILIAN DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (MDB), WILL ALSO NOMINATE ITS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. BUT OBVIOUSLY HIS CHANCES OF BEING CHOSEN BY THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE ARE DOOMED BEFOREHAND

UNTIL RECENTLY, THE HARDLINERS HAD SUPPORTED ARMY MINISTER SYLVIO FROTA. BUT AFTER HE WAS FIRED BY PRESIDENT GEISEL LAST OCTOBER THEY GAVE UP ALL HOPE OF BEING ABLE TO INFLUENCE THE CHOICE OF A PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSOR.

GENERAL FIGUEIREDO IS CONSIDERED A MODERATE, AND HIS CANDIDACY WAS OPPOSED BY THE HARD-LINE ELEMENTS IN THE BRAZILIAN ARMED FORCES. STILL, VERY LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT HIS STAND ON KEY POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES.

PRESIDENT GEISEL HAS GONE ON RECORD AS FAVORING GRADUAL LIBERALIZATION AND EVENTUAL RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE. AND THE FIRING OF GENERAL FROTA AND THE SELECTION OF GENERAL FIGUEIREDO AS THE NEXT PRESIDENT HAVE GIVEN RISE TO FURTHER SPECULATION THAT THE BRAZILIAN MILITARY LEADERSHIP IS INDEED CONTEMPLATING A PHASING OUT OF MILITARY RULE. WHILE THIS IS NOT CONSIDERED LIKELY WITHIN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, THERE ARE GROWING SIGNS THAT THE MILITARY INTEND TO RETURN TO THEIR MORE TRADITIONAL ROLE AS "MODERATORS" OF BRAZIL'S POLITICAL SYSTEM.

JS/PBM